

Officials see need for better yardsticks but urge caution

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Harvard professor John Dunlop, head of the Construction Industry Stabilization Committee, has cautioned against preoccupation with the development of ways to measure productivity in construction at the expense of more immediate gains at the job site.

"We'll be doing things long before we have a [productivity] measure," Dunlop said last week in summarizing a day-long conference on measuring productivity in the construction industry. The Washington, D.C., meeting was jointly sponsored by the National Conference on Productivity and the Construction Industry Collective Bargaining Commission.

Dunlop said the conference was significant because "we have reached the stage in this industry where we can talk about these things in a reasonable way."

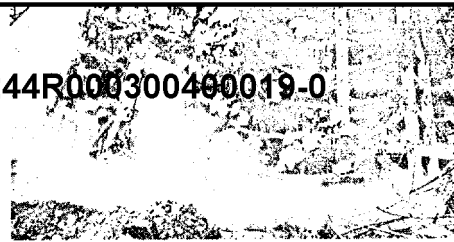
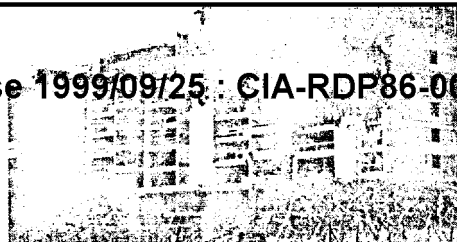
The conference, which was primarily an academic discussion of productivity measures, resulted in two basic conclusions: There is presently no accurate way to measure productivity in the industry, and the means of measuring productivity should be developed. The conference consensus was that the peculiarities of the industry dictate a need to develop a "family of measures" for productivity instead of a single measure.

In developing these measures, Dunlop warned, "We must be acutely aware of their purpose." He said the industry has gotten into difficulties when it "assumed a measure of productivity is for a single purpose."

Dunlop defended the industry against charges that it has ceased to be efficient. "The industry is highly efficient in adapting to unstable demands," he said. "It's efficient because it's flexible."

Labor Secretary James Hodgson and Commerce Secretary Peter Peterson both warned against turning productivity and the development of ways to measure it into an adversary proceeding.

This sentiment was also echoed by Ironworkers' president John Lyons in observing that the conference represented the first time the government has sat down to discuss productivity with "people who know the industry." And Plumbers' president Martin Ward emphasized the need for cooperation in developing accurate productivity data.



## Unfinished apartment towers razed

After months of legal maneuvering aimed at stalling the court-ordered destruction of two partially finished apartment towers in Hull, Quebec, demolition is expected to be complete this week.

Erected in violation of a single-family zoning by-law, the two buildings last year were ordered demolished by the Supreme Court of Canada. A deadline of June 20, 1972, set for the start of demolition work, passed unheeded as the project's developer-builder, Les Entreprises Dasken, Ltd., Montreal, claimed it lacked the funds to comply with the court order (ENR 7/16 p. 13).

The mayor of Hull then attempted to get a private bill through the Quebec National Assembly retroactively rezoning the area for commercial buildings, a move that would negate the court decision. The attempt failed, so the property owners group that brought the original lawsuit began asking for public contributions to pay a wrecker.

Meanwhile, after a city-wide referendum that resulted in a 70% vote in favor of demolition, a superior court judge refused to issue an injunction blocking demolition. This action had been brought by another group of owners of property immediately bordering the doomed apartment complex who feared that not enough money had been collected to pay for demolition, and the buildings, instead of being partially completed, would be only partially demolished.

Demolition, to cost \$125,000, will be paid for by the homeowners group that brought the original suit who say they will sue the developer to recover the wrecking fee.

But the development company has already launched a suit seeking \$3.7 million from the city of Hull, claiming that the city erred in issuing a building permit. The mayor, however, says that the permit contains a clause freeing the city of any responsibility.

## EPA gets louder voice under Senate noise bill

The Senate Public Works Committee last week released a comprehensive noise control bill (S.3342), already passed in slightly different form in the House, that calls for a standard-setting process keyed to the best available technology for a wide range of U.S. industry, including construction.

The bill has support from many industrial interests that want the federal statute because it would provide one nationwide standard rather than a maze of different codes that might be required under a large number of state and local laws. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) favors the law, which sets up an office of noise control within EPA.

As released by the committee, the measure calls for the EPA to establish

criteria on noise that "reflect the scientific knowledge most useful in indicating the kind and extent of all identifiable effects on the public health or welfare which may be expected from differing quantities and qualities of noise."

The bill calls for a series of reports on how to regulate noise and how to designate major classes of noise producers. And it preempts states from setting more stringent noise standards than those promulgated by the federal government.

The measure could be snagged on the Senate floor by the Commerce Committee, which opposes a provision requiring EPA, instead of the Federal Aviation Administration, to study airport noise and set maximum limits.

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